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Alabama
**The State Normal
School**

FOR

Colored Students

AT

Montgomery

ITS HISTORY FOR THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS

AND

ITS NEEDS OF TODAY

BY

ITS PRINCIPAL, W. B. PATERSON.

Respectfully Presented to the Members of the Present
Legislature for their Consideration.

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FOREWORD.

A Bill for the further support and maintenance of this Institution has been introduced into both branches of the Legislature. The Board of Trustees consists of the Governor and State Superintendent of Education, ExOfficio members.

Hon. H. S. D. Mallory, Selma;
Hon. J. Kirkman Jackson, Montgomery;
Hon. J. M. Davison, Brewton;
Dr. C. A. Stakely, Montgomery;
Wm. B. Jones, Esq., Montgomery.

At a meeting of this Board held in the Governor's office, January 29th, the condition of the Institution and its needs were discussed, and it was unanimously decided to introduce this Bill, the provisions of which will be stated below.

The present Principal is familiar with the work of the school since its organization, and has been Principal for thirty-three years. His work as teacher of colored students now covers a period of forty-one years, and he considers himself fortunate that there are a few members of both houses that are conversant with his work during that entire time.

ORIGIN OF THE SCHOOL.

The Land Grant Act of 1862 from which originated the State Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges of the various States, could not be taken advantage of in Alabama till after the Civil War. In fact, it was ten years after its passage before Alabama through its Legislature took action. The 250,000 acres of Public Lands donated by the General Government were sold for \$260,000.00, which was turned into the treasury, and the State has paid \$20,800.00 annually to Auburn since that time. The act

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establishing the Agricultural College at Auburn was approved February 26, 1872.

As this money came from the General Government, the following Legislature deemed it fair and proper to do something for the colored students of the State, and an Act was passed and approved December 6, 1873, to establish a State Normal School and University for Colored Students. This was located at Marion, Perry County, the property of a school there, being donated by the Negroes for that purpose. Two thousand dollars annually were appropriated for its support with the understanding that this amount should be increased as the wants of the Negro Race demanded.

This was the first Normal School established in the State and for many years was the only school of its kind for Negroes in the South. At present it is the only Colored Normal School in Alabama under State control.

HISTORY.

The progress of the school was slow at first, as there were but few colored public school to prepare students. In 1878 when the present principal took charge of it, he found the enrollment of the previous session had been 68. For the first time since the organization of the school, the principal had the confidence and hearty co-operation of both Trustees and patrons, and the school grew rapidly till the attendance reached nearly 500 in 1887, when it was deemed advisable to remove the Institution from Marion. The Board of Trustees re-established the school at Montgomery, but opposition developed against the location of the school here. The matter was carried into the Courts, and the school was left without funds for the next year. At the next meeting of the Legislature the Act of Removal from Marion was again passed, carrying \$15,000.00 for building purposes and \$7,500.00 for annual maintenance. Six thousand dollars of the above \$15,000.-

00 for buildings was to be paid out of the educational fund due the school, for the previous year, so that only nine thousand dollars were paid out of the General Funds of the State. This amount represents all that the State has given to the school for buildings or equipment in thirty-three years.

When the Board, appointed by Governor Seay, met in May 1889 to locate the school, objections were again made to its location near this City, the objectors relying on a proviso in the Act giving any *Community* the right to object. But as the Act passed used the word *City* instead of *Community*, and as the location was half a mile outside of the City, they had no right to object. This, if fully written, would form a most interesting chapter in the history of the school, but is only mentioned here that the standing of the school then, may be compared with that of today, after an experience of 24 years. The school is within sight of the Capitol and its record during that time is an open book. The City has taken it in and given the students paved side-walks from the school to the heart of the City. During the year when State aid was not available the school was kept going by the colored citizens of Montgomery with about 300 pupils. The enrolment today is 1078.

PROPERTY.

The property today consists of five acres of land, one twostory brick building and five frame buildings. The land, buildings and equipments are well worth \$75,000.00. The State, through its Board of Trustees, appointed by the Governor, holds all this property in fee simple title. Of this amount only \$9,000.00 has been contributed from the General Funds of the State, the balance has been given by the colored people themselves. Whenever the school has been in need they have helped, and this con-

fidence of theirs in the people of the State demands in return that the people "tote" fair with them.

INCOME.

In 1889 the school was put on an equality as to income with the white Normal Schools of the State and given an appropriation of \$7,500.00 annually. Later \$1,000.00 annually from the Agricultural Fund was added to this. Up until two years ago it was a beneficiary of \$1,500.00 or \$2,000.00 from the Peabody Fund, but was dropped then. For several years it received \$3,500.00 annually from the John F. Slater Fund, but \$500.00 of this was cut off this year. The management of these funds claim that their object is to help younger institutions and that Alabama should support our school. Tuition collected from the preparatory grades of the school amounts to about \$4,000.00 annually. This brought the income up to about \$17,000.00 annually. Last year and the present it has dropped to \$15,000.00, leaving a deficit in two years of \$4,000.00. On an average attendance of 1,000 students the per capita expense is only \$15.00. The per capita expense of the colored schools of the same grade throughout the South runs from \$60.00 to \$200.00, and we find no Normal School anywhere run at less than \$50.00 per student.

THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL.

It is not a college, only an elementary school with industrial features. It is located within 75 miles of 75 per cent of the Negro population of the State. It furnishes teachers for the colored public schools and has the reputation of furnishing the best. It draws its patronage from 33 Counties in the State, including all the Black Belt.

Probably no school was ever begun under more unfa-

avorable auspices than this, twenty-four years ago. This opposition has been overcome and those citizens who have become conversant with the school, its methods and results, have heartily endorsed it. The instruction given has been elementary but thorough, the discipline has been such as to inculcate respect for authority and obedience to law, and good habits have been taught by precept and example. There is always an atmosphere of work and obedience around the students that must affect their after lives.

The apparent disadvantages under which the work of the institution has been carried on has redounded to the good of the students. Possessing no elaborate buildings and no dormitories with modern improvements such as most colored schools of much smaller size have, country students who have come here have been trained for service without being educated out of their environment. The result is they return home after getting their education and give their service as teachers or otherwise to the State.

The habit of work is indelibly stamped upon the character of all and no loafers or vagrants are to be found among them.

There has been enough and to spare of discussion of the Negro Problem. A residence of 42 years in Alabama, all but one of which I have spent in the school room with negro pupils, and during all of which I have never forsaken my own people, socially or politically, gives me a claim to a fair knowledge of this question, and so far as I can judge today it is simply a question of his education. By education I mean training—preparation for work or service—to make a living honestly and honorably. My experience with the negro has not been confined to the schoolroom alone. For years I have employed them as laborers, and had the usual experience of others, both in the kitchen and in the garden, with shiftless and unreliable employees.

One great mistake concerning the negro has been corrected, so far as Alabama is concerned. Another mistake has been made in allowing his education to drift along without proper supervision, so that most of the money given to the colored country schools has been virtually thrown away.

That the negro can be trained in domestic service and the mechanic arts was abundantly proved before the war. If those in authority and have charge of his schools take hold of him in the right way, he can be so trained yet; but the Negro himself cannot do it.

The position taken by Governor Hoke Smith in his Inaugural address four years ago, and Ex-Governor Northern in a later address in Virginia is the correct one and the white people should take hold of the negro schools and carry out these ideas.

The Negro is here and so far as we can see, will be here for sometime to come. His labor is valuable. It behooves every patriotic citizen to develop that labor to highest capacity. No foreign labor can displace the negro on the farm, and all such labor that comes into Alabama will not meet the demands of the mining and manufacturing districts.

The colored country schools should be taken hold of; the white Trustees and Superintendents should exercise more than a nominal supervision of them.

The white people should take hold of the negro and elevate him for the good of the State as well as for his own. If we think he ought to get an elementary book education and be taught to work, we should take hold of him and do that. If he is to be taught respect for authority and obedience to law it must be done in the schools while he is susceptible of training. It cannot be done in reform schools or penitentiaries.

If the negro is to be kept in the country he must have more and better schools, which means more and better teachers. To produce these teachers this school should

be fostered, as it is the only school of such grade supported by the State.

NEEDS OF THE SCHOOL.

Owing to the loss of funds before mentioned the school is in debt today \$3,000.00, and it is only through the courtesy of our bankers that we have been able to keep open.

The main building is badly in need of a new roof, which will cost \$1,000.00. The City has extended its limits beyond the school and we were notified last year to put in proper sanitary arrangements or close up the school. At my request the time was extended till your meeting, but sanitary connections which will cost \$1,000.00 must be made before next fall opening. Surface closets for the use of over 1,100 people (teachers and students) must of necessity be a nuisance. The above items (total \$5,000.00) you are asked to appropriate at once out of the General Funds.

In order to expand and equip the Industrial Department, especially in cooking and the domestic arts, an appropriation of ten thousand dollars, payable next October, is asked for. It was feared and prophesied when the school was located in Montgomery that it would be impossible to find a colored cook or housemaid in a few years; yet they are so plentiful now that we hear nothing of this. Probably two hundred of our students, male and female, are paying their expenses in school by labor in white families. They work mornings and evenings and Saturdays and get board and room and a small payment in money weekly. Only about twenty per cent of our students complete the full course and graduate. As the diffusion of knowledge has become more general and education has been put more within the reach of the masses there is a decreasing tendency to educated idleness. We desire to direct a large part of our time and teaching to the majority who do not graduate, but who go out to perform in-

telligently the work of the masses. The work of the school is very much handicapped at present by the want of sufficient teaching force. We have some teachers teaching as many as 60 to 75 pupils, and the funds are only sufficient to pay them for eight months per year, while the school term extends over nine months.

We ask that the annual appropriation be increased by \$7,500.00 annually to be paid out of the Educational Fund. While this is taken from the Educational Fund it will not affect white children and will take only about two cents per capita from Negro school children of the State. In distributing the school funds the County Boards always appropriate sufficient to run the white schools properly.

If the above appropriations are made we will be ready to accept an offer from Mr. Carnegie to give us \$15,000.00 for the erection of a library and assembly room, which we need. This will be a brick building and which will add that much more to the State's property. The City has already, through its Council, voted \$500.00 annually for the support of the library.

If our requests are granted, the State will own by January 1, 1912 property worth \$100,000.00 for which it has paid only \$24,000.00 out of the General Funds.

CONCLUSION.

The foregoing facts are respectfully presented for the consideration of the Legislature. The bitter feeling aroused during the decade immediately after the war has been mollified so far that every patriotic citizen can calmly consider the question,—How can we best train the Negro to be of service to himself and to the State? When properly handled he is a good mechanic and a good laborer; as a law-abiding citizen and property owner he pays taxes of every kind paid in the State; and, as a criminal, he paid nearly a million dollars last year into the State Treasury.

The State can afford to give a little of this to train his children.

If these appropriations are made, the Legislature of 1915, will find in Montgomery the Model Negro Normal School of the South. Then will our ambition of forty years be realized. For during all the discussion of the Negro and his education, ~~he has~~ ^{we have} left theorizing to others believing that, in due course of ~~truce~~ ^{time} Alabama would build up an institution for Negro students, that the best people of the State could point to with pride.



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